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Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Informal interactive hearings of the General Assembly with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector on the Millennium Development Goals

Note by the President of the General Assembly

The President of the General Assembly has the honour to transmit the summary of the informal interactive hearings of the General Assembly with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, prepared pursuant to paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 64/184 (see annex).

* A/65/50.

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Annex

Summary of the informal interactive hearings of the General Assembly with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private section on the Millennium Development Goals

Introduction

1. The General Assembly held informal interactive hearings with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector on 14 and 15 June 2010 in New York, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/184. The hearings were organized by the President of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly as an input to the preparatory process for the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held from 20 to 22 September 2010 in New York.

2. The themes for the hearings were based on the report of the Secretary-General of 12 February 2010 entitled "Keeping the promise: a forward-looking review to promote an agreed action agenda to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015" (A/64/665).[1] Four interactive sessions were held under the themes of: "Building a better tomorrow: local actions, national strategies and global structures"; "Equal and inclusive partnerships: accountability in the fight against poverty"; "Sustaining development and withstanding crises"; "From voice to policy: 1,660 days left".

3. Forty-six speakers and 519 observers, representing 335 non-governmental, civil society and private-sector organizations, participated in the hearings, together with representatives of Member States and observers. Well over half of the participants were women.

4. The present summary of the hearings provides Member States with a resource for their consultations on the outcome document to be adopted at the high-level plenary meeting. The summary offers some guiding principles and proposals by civil society and the private sector for the way forward to 2015, including through participatory accountability frameworks. It then sets out a range of specific proposals under Goals 1 to 8, as part of a global "Millennium Development Goal breakthrough plan" called for by many civil society organizations.

Guiding principles and proposals for the way forward

5. Participants emphasized that the Millennium Development Goals had provided a common and unifying framework for development and a useful mobilization tool.

6. Many speakers reaffirmed the message of the Secretary-General in his report (A/64/665) that the Millennium Development Goals rest upon the Millennium

[1] A global online consultation based on the Secretary-General's comprehensive report, to which over 160 international, national and local civil society organizations contributed, is available at www.un-ngls.org/mdgconsultation. Written statements from the hearings are available at www.un-ngls.org/mdg2010.

Declaration[2] and are an expression of human rights. Among those rights, participants emphasized both civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to development. Participants also pointed out that although over half the world's population was composed of women, realizing gender equality remained one of the most difficult Goals to achieve; that had implications for the realization of all the Goals.

7. For many speakers, the onset of the multiple global food, economic and climate crises had only reinforced concerns expressed by civil society for many years that the prevailing development model of recent decades was unsustainable. Many participants echoed the Secretary-General's call for strengthened national ownership of policies to pursue more inclusive, equitable and environmentally sustainable development paths. That implied the need for greater policy space to mobilize domestic resources and align forward-looking macroeconomic and sectoral policies with development goals, which were currently often still restricted by inappropriate external conditionalities, trade rules and the constraints imposed by international financial markets. That pointed to the need for major reforms in international economic and development cooperation.

8. While developed countries had fallen short of fulfilling their commitments, uneven domestic distribution of resources in developing countries also undermined the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. It was noted that, in recent years, many developing countries had experienced high levels of economic growth, but poverty reduction and job creation had lagged behind: so-called "jobless growth".

9. Throughout the hearings, panellists offered examples of the many best practices that could be scaled up and replicated in order to reach the Goals by 2015. For example, it was noted that the Government of Malawi had brought back agricultural subsidies for small farmers in 2004. Between 2005 and 2007, that had resulted in a twofold productivity increase, turning a food deficit of 43 per cent into a food surplus of 57 per cent. The proportion of people living on less than US$ 1 a day had fallen from 52 per cent to 40 per cent. In Brazil, the "Fome zero" (Zero hunger) programme included cash transfers, food banks, community kitchens and school meals, and had reached over 44 million Brazilians suffering from hunger. That had helped reduce child malnutrition by 73 per cent. In India, the National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme provided a legal guarantee of 100 days of employment a year, paid at the statutory minimum wage, for at least one member of rural households and was reaching some 40 million households living below the poverty line. Those types of example reinforced the view that the Millennium Development Goals were achievable if the necessary political will was there.

10. Many participants welcomed the Secretary-General's insistence on a holistic approach to the Millennium Development Goals. A "sectoral" approach to the Goals could lead to outcomes where young people benefited from adequate health and education services only to face an economic system that did not provide enough productive jobs. With regard to Millennium Development Goal targets designed to redress some of the most glaring gender inequalities, there had been greater progress on access to education for girls than on reducing maternal mortality. Calls were made for more investment to improve the position of the most off-track Millennium

[2] General Assembly resolution 55/2.

Development Goals and regions, for which additional resources were required in order to avoid cutting back on continued progress on other Goals. In the same vein, preserving biodiversity and environmental resources (under Goal 7) provided key building blocks for poverty reduction under Goal 1. A broader holistic approach meant fully addressing the cross-cutting obstacles hindering the realization of all the Goals, whether they were difficulties in mobilizing additional resources, unsustainable and inequitable development paths, or unaccountable governance structures at the national and international levels.

11. The mutual responsibility of developed and developing countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 depended on strengthening the frameworks for accountability. Through those frameworks, Member States, individually and collectively, must be accountable to their citizens and support their further empowerment in advancing development. Accountability mechanisms should have strong civil society participation and be rooted in national and international human rights mechanisms. Localized targets and indicators to monitor progress in terms of the differential impact of policies on socially excluded and marginalized groups were also seen as essential. A gender- and social-exclusion-based audit of the Goals, undertaken in full cooperation with civil society, was seen as an essential immediate step to be taken in the new 2010-2015 accountability framework, to which the high-level plenary meeting should agree in September.

12. The principal recommendations coming out of the hearings in that regard were:

(a) The role of existing national and international human rights accountability mechanisms should be increased and strengthened, including by providing such institutions with legal authority to monitor and hear complaints on human rights violations. Governments should report on their Millennium Development Goal performance to such bodies and comply with their decisions.

(b) States should ratify optional protocols to human rights treaties, especially the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

(c) Reporting on national and international implementation of the Millennium Development Goals should be systematically integrated into national reports to the universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council and to the international human rights treaty bodies.

(d) The full and effective participation of civil society organizations, including women's organizations, indigenous people's organizations and grass-roots organizations of the poor, in the design, planning, implementation and monitoring of all Millennium Development Goal-related programmes and policies should be guaranteed. That, in turn, implied that the rights to freedom of expression, information, assembly and association should be guaranteed.

(e) It should be ensured that all development operations and policies affecting the territories of indigenous people and other ethnic minorities are subject to their free, prior and informed consent.

(f) At the local level, "development pacts" should be implemented whereby local authorities made public commitments to deliver on development objectives defined by local communities; and transparent mechanisms should be put in place in

order to enable local civil society organizations to hold the authorities accountable concerning how funds are spent and whether policy commitments are implemented, and in order to combat corruption.

(g) Governments should strengthen their commitment to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment as cross-cutting priorities for reaching all the Goals by 2015. Women's organizations and grass-roots women must have formal mechanisms for meaningful and systematic participation in the new United Nations gender entity at the global, regional and national levels.

(h) Mechanisms for monitoring and mutual accountability between donors and recipient countries should be strengthened and there should be greater coherence of development policies, within a participatory framework that ensures more balanced country representation. The United Nations Development Cooperation Forum should be the main mechanism for tracking progress and mutual accountability among all development actors, with the strengthened participation of other key stakeholders.

(i) As was frequently noted, progress on poverty reduction also requires strong participatory frameworks anchored on human rights principles, and greater transparency in combating corruption and capital flight, which, by some accounts, could represent as much as $1 trillion per year for developing countries as a whole, or 10 times the amount of official development assistance.

(j) Consideration should be given to the establishment of a global economic coordination council to ensure the accountability of global economic governance and its coherence with development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (see Goal 8).

Millennium Development Goal 1: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

13. Many participants emphasized the need for decisive progress on Goal 1, not only to reduce poverty and hunger, but also to advance all the other Goals. It was reiterated that even before the global economic and food crises caused major regressions under Goal 1, the absolute number of people in poverty had increased in many parts of the world between 1990 and 2005. Therefore, many participants insisted on the need to embed future poverty reduction strategies within alternative development strategies, placing central importance on the generation of more productive employment with higher wages, major investments to support small farmers' capacities to produce staple foods for the local market and mechanisms to protect their livelihoods from cheap imports, price drops and natural disasters.

14. The main recommendations made with regard to Millennium Development Goal 1 were:

(a) It should be ensured that developing countries have the policy space to determine and implement their nationally owned, democratically determined development priorities.

(b) Developing countries should put in place national Millennium Development Goal 1 "rescue plans", with costed, time-bound strategies for achieving

the target of halving hunger, while donors must commit themselves to funding "financing gaps" as part of their commitment to realizing Goal 1.

(c) To support the legal empowerment of the poor, Governments should integrate human rights objectives into macroeconomic policies.

(d) Rapid implementation of the Global Jobs Pact should be promoted to stimulate economic recovery and socio-economic transformation, notably by redressing "jobless growth", to establish a social protection floor in every country and to upgrade the capacities and rights of actors in the informal economy, including women. Sectoral policies should support small and microenterprises in the informal economy, where the vast majority of workers making less than $1.25 a day are earning a living.

(e) Stimulus packages in response to the ongoing crisis must be maintained but refocused on providing employment-intensive investments in social infrastructure and quality public services. In the face of calls to phase out stimulus measures for fiscal consolidation, those investments should be made permanent and efforts made to regain fiscal space, including through international cooperation.

(f) Banking, microinsurance and other financial services that can reach low-income and remote communities, and small and microenterprises should be promoted. Loan guarantees to microcredit institutions and other measures to decentralize access to finance, such as mobile phone banking and, more broadly, branchless banking using postal and other retail outlets, should be facilitated.

(g) Enabling and proportionate regulatory and supervisory frameworks conducive to financial inclusion should be developed, taking into account the peculiarities of reaching out to underserved communities. An appropriate level of consumer protection should be ensured, as a core element for building long-term relationships based on trust and confidence.

(h) Governments and donors should invest in women smallholder farmers as a key to halving hunger, as such investment results in twice as much growth as investment in any other sector. Governments should remove judicial and other obstacles that female entrepreneurs and women business leaders are confronted with, notably in terms of access to land and credit. In addition, aid to agriculture should be focused on staple crops, the promotion of local production for local use, and the preservation of biodiversity and traditional knowledge.

(i) Global spending on food security should be increased by at least $40 billion per year to tackle urgent hunger needs.

(j) Dialogue between small farmers, scientists, agribusinesses, non-governmental organizations, think tanks and Government services should be promoted in order to explore sustainable agricultural practices that improve productivity and build on indigenous knowledge, while preserving and restoring soils and the natural environment.

(k) The stronger organization of small farmers to develop more equitable relations in their partnerships with the other actors in the supply chain in order to raise their income should be supported. The use of new information and communication technologies to deliver knowledge and information to farmers should be promoted.

(l) A universal social protection floor should be established that would include such elements as an employment guarantee, cash transfers, cash and food packages, public works employment schemes, free school meals, unemployment benefits and other social allocations. Care must be taken in the design of those schemes to avoid a gendered division of work as the instrument and channel for delivering services.

(m) Special measures should be taken to ensure that people living in extreme poverty, including women and children, and other vulnerable and excluded groups, such as indigenous people and the disabled, are not bypassed by social protection. The universal social protection floor should be explicitly established within a framework of basic human rights.

Millennium Development Goal 2: achieve universal primary education

15. It was noted that strong gains have been made towards the realization of Goal 2. School user fees have been lowered in many countries, allowing some of the world's poorest children to attend school. Forty million more children have been able to attend school in the past eight years. The world has the know-how and resources to ensure that everyone has an education. Yet progress is still far too slow: at current rates the education targets will not be met in the next 100 years, let alone by 2015.

16. The main recommendations for Millennium Development Goal 2 were:

(a) Sickness and malnutrition, poor planning and poor infrastructure are among the barriers to accessing education that can often become insurmountable for many children and young people. The achievement of all the other Goals has a direct impact on the achievement of education targets.

(b) While investment in primary education is essential, it is also important to invest in the expansion of post-primary education, especially for adolescent girls. The transition to secondary school must become as natural and inevitable as entry into primary school. In order to build on gains in education in the past decade, Governments and other stakeholders should consider making this a key development priority.

(c) Achievement of the Millennium Development Goal targets will only be possible if adolescents are able to transition successfully from school to decent work. Opportunities for adolescents should be strengthened so they can make a successful transition into remunerative work. Girls, especially, should see their future economic possibilities both in the books they read and in the career guidance they receive, so that they are encouraged to learn skills that are more relevant to labour market opportunities.

Millennium Development Goal 3: promote gender equality and empower women

17. It was repeatedly emphasized that advancing gender equality is not simply a function of Millennium Development Goal 3, but an underlying aspect of all of the

Goals. Women comprise two thirds of the people living in extreme poverty and any attempt to alleviate poverty must examine the gender discrimination underlying Goal 1. Violence against women is also an impediment to women's participation in development and their ability to exercise their human rights.

18. The main recommendations relating to Millennium Development Goal 3 were:

(a) The meaningful participation of women in decision-making should be scaled up immediately, at all levels. In particular efforts to encourage and make it possible for women to become elected officials should be further accelerated.

(b) Gender-based violence should be addressed in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1), in 2006. Combating such violence should be established as a target in the Millennium Development Goals agenda.

(c) Progress on women's empowerment could be better monitored and be more efficient through the development of more systematic collection of data, disaggregated by age and gender.

(d) Taking into account existing mandates, the outcome document should support the rapid establishment of the consolidated gender equality entity. This new United Nations body can serve as a catalyst for accelerating action at the country level to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6: improving global health for all

19. Throughout the sessions, participants highlighted the strong interlinkages between the three health-related Millennium Development Goals (4, 5 and 6) and the other Goals. While acknowledging that significant progress had been made on some health-related targets, they noted that many obstacles remained to achieving the health-related Goals by 2015. In particular, they pointed to the alarming results in the area of maternal health and also to the risk of major regressions in other areas, notably HIV/AIDS and child mortality. If further progress is to be made on the health-related Goals, more attention should be paid to the needs and perspectives of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

20. The main recommendations in regard to the three health-related Millennium Development Goals were:

(a) Participants pointed to the shortage and inequitable distribution of health workers within countries as one of the greatest obstacles to achievement of the health-related Goals. To address that problem, Governments should assess their health system; strengthen their health workforce; train workers; and ensure a fair distribution of human and material resources. National health plans need to be fully funded. Predictable and sustainable financing mechanisms should be put in place.

(b) Additional international development assistance is needed to scale up national health systems. Further technical and scientific support and capacity-building assistance should be provided.

(c) Barriers to accessing health services are still numerous, in particular for marginalized groups. Those barriers include user fees, informal fees, inadequate and unaffordable transportation, poor communications and distance from health facilities.

(d) Health systems need to be accountable to communities, including the most disadvantaged and marginalized. Governments should develop accountability mechanisms to report on and monitor health services; to release detailed data about Government and donor aid for health and related performance indicators; and to strengthen the relationship between health workers and communities.

(e) The research and development of innovative medicines and vaccines needs to be further developed and supported. Greater efforts need to be made to find the right balance between the use of intellectual property rights for innovation and access to affordable essential drugs. At the same time, recognition of and respect for the traditional medicines and practices of indigenous peoples should be improved.

(f) Sexual and reproductive health services must be accessible, affordable and culturally sensitive. Comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services should include contraception, maternity care, safe abortion services, prevention, diagnosis, counselling and treatment. Comprehensive sexuality education for children and young people, both in and out of school, should be encouraged.

(g) HIV/AIDS is not only a health issue. Universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support is a prerequisite for achieving all the Millennium Development Goals. The target of universal access should be extended to 2015. Policies should support the achievement of universal access for the most vulnerable groups, including women and girls, young people, injection drug users, sex workers, men who have sex with men, migrants and others. People living with HIV/AIDS should not be criminalized. Governments should support specific measures for women and young people, who remain disproportionately affected by HIV. Community mobilization and the direct engagement of people affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic should be promoted among all stakeholders.

(h) The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has played an important role through its inclusive approach to development. The commitment to "full funding" for the Global Fund should be renewed.

Millennium Development Goal 7: ensure environmental sustainability

21. It was broadly recognized that the Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved without greater advancements with respect to Goal 7. In particular, it was noted that progress on improving sustainable access to improved water and sanitation is lacking. Through the realization of those most basic rights, 2 million child deaths could be prevented every year, as could the loss of 443 million school days, and needless economic waste that drains up to 5 per cent of some countries' gross domestic product could be avoided.

22. Climate change is an important variable in the process of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Climate change impacts are already negatively affecting lives and livelihoods, in particular those of rural women, indigenous people and small farmers.

23. The main recommendations concerning Millennium Development Goal 7 were:

(a) Support for national plans to make water and sanitation available to all should be strengthened and it should be ensured that resources are allocated in a transparent manner and that services reach the poor and marginalized. Water, sanitation and hygiene policies should be integrated with those of other sectors, such as health and education.

(b) Large-scale investment in green infrastructure, as a response to the climate crisis and to further promote more sustainable development pathways, should be prioritized. Introducing renewable energies, green construction and green transportation could enhance energy efficiency. In turn, this could also stimulate green and decent employment creation across a range of sectors.

(c) Governments should scale up mitigation, adaptation, financing and technology in response to climate change. To achieve this, it is imperative that developed countries set binding targets to reduce emissions by 40 per cent by 2020. They must also pay their "fair share" of the cost of tackling the effects of climate change in developing countries. Poor farmers' vulnerability to climate change should be reduced by investment in sustainable agriculture, local irrigation schemes and better use of local biodiversity.

(d) Ecologically destructive activities must cease and systems for early warning of natural disasters should be put in place.

(e) It is also important to ensure the full and effective participation of people, particularly indigenous groups, in the regulatory mechanisms, respecting the principal of free, prior and informed consent.

Millennium Development Goal 8: develop a global partnership for development

24. Many participants called for a major breakthrough in the global partnership for development. Governments must honour that partnership and scale up the mobilization of resources to finance the realization of all the Millennium Development Goals, provide the policy and fiscal space needed to prevent further regressions in their achievement caused by systemic shocks, and reorient development strategies towards more equitable and sustainable paths.

25. The main recommendations concerning Millennium Development Goal 8 were:

(a) Donor countries should commit themselves to meeting interim targets between 2010 and 2015.

(b) To strengthen national ownership, budget support should increasingly be used as the main modality for aid delivery to countries committed to poverty reduction and good domestic accountability systems.

(c) All Member States should commit themselves to making significant reductions in military expenditure, the savings from which should be earmarked as resources to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

(d) Emergency support for counter-cyclical crisis response and mitigation should be in the form of grants not loans, especially for least developed countries, in order to avert a new debt crisis and further regressions in the realization of the Goals.

(e) Debt cancellation (not diverted from official development assistance) for the poorest countries should be part of the crisis response. All odious and illegitimate debt should be audited and cancelled. A fair and transparent debt work-out mechanism should be established to ensure enforceable and equitable arbitration of sovereign debt restructuring under the auspices of the United Nations.

(f) A financial transactions tax should be introduced to recoup the losses to taxpayers caused by financial rescue plans, help stabilize financial markets and generate the hundreds of billions of dollars needed each year to support developing countries to transition to more equitable and sustainable development paths capable of meeting all the Millennium Development Goals. The allocation of the funds raised should be managed within a United Nations framework.

(g) In order to combat capital flight, tax competition, corporate tax evasion and transfer pricing and to enable developing countries to mobilize domestic resources, a United Nations intergovernmental commission on tax matters should be established and, thereafter, a multilateral agreement on the automatic exchange of information should be adopted and country-by-country reporting by transnational corporations initiated.

(h) A new global reserve system based on a supranational global reserve currency, as well as regional currencies, should be established. In addition, the potential of special drawing rights for development should continue to be explored, including through reforms in the areas of allocation, interest charges, composition of the basket, transferability and use.

(i) Support should be given to regional initiatives for financial decentralization and the empowerment of the people of the South to exercise control over their own development paths, notably through alternative regional development banks and monetary funds, and currency cooperation.

(j) The credit rating agency industry should be reformed and an independent supervisory institution (or institutions) established, based on greater transparency about ratings and strict regulation, including on conflicts of interest.

(k) The right of developing countries to use capital management techniques not only for crisis prevention but to direct investments towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals and other development goals should be recognized.

(l) There should be international cooperation to re-regulate financial markets in order to rein in financial speculation in general and speculation in food and commodity markets in particular.

(m) The current Doha trade agenda and all existing multilateral, regional and bilateral trade agreements, as well as those under negotiation, should be reviewed with the aim of removing elements in them that could lead to further regressions in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals caused by inappropriate trade liberalization. The call by the least developed countries for an "early harvest" of unilateral trade measures in favour of the least developed countries should be endorsed.

(n) The adoption of food and livelihoods safeguard mechanisms in all trade agreements, without quid pro quo concessions by developing countries, should be supported as an essential means of stabilizing progress.

(o) The right of developing countries to fully use the flexibilities within the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to source affordable medicines should be supported.

(p) The proposal for a global economic council should be fully supported as an inclusive forum for deliberation and decision-making on global economic and financial questions, and the coherence of policy with development objectives; and the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly should be called on to follow up on the issues contained in the Outcome of the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development[3] and to bring that proposal back to the table for serious consideration.

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[3] Resolution 63/303, annex.